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## **EDUCATION: A DRIVING FORCE IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ECONOMY**

The continued economic strength and security of the United States is tied directly to providing our citizens with access to high-quality basic education, affordable post-secondary options, and lifelong learning opportunities. In order for future generations of Americans to compete and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, we must ensure they are critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and well-studied in the areas of math, science, reading, and history. We must maintain and fulfill our commitment to educational institutions for reasons beyond our continued economic success. We must do so because America's public education system is at the foundation of our vibrant democracy and enables all Americans to participate in the opportunities inherent in our great nation.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE**

It is an ongoing challenge for working families in America to find safe and affordable child care assistance, even as the number of households with both parents in the workforce has grown. Representative Schwartz believes that emphasis must be paid to ensuring hard-working parents have adequate child care options, and that these efforts must be matched with attention to the quality of that care and early education. That is why she has worked to maintain federal support for Even Start, Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant – vital child care initiatives that merge early learning and well-child care.

### **ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Representative Schwartz realizes that the students of today are the workforce of tomorrow. In order for the U.S. to remain competitive in the global market, our education system must remain the best. Representative Schwartz has endorsed proposals that would bolster intensive reading and math instruction, modernize and implement new technologies in schools, and train and recruit new teachers. She also supports efforts to increase the number of students studying science, engineering, and math.

### **NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

Throughout her career, Representative Schwartz has worked vigorously to raise education standards and improve the performance of the nation's public schools. She strongly supports the core objectives of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) – educating every child and demanding accountability from our public schools. However, since NCLB was signed into law in 2001, the Republican majority in Congress has not fulfilled the financial commitments it made – failing to provide our schools with \$56.7 billion. This has unfairly put many school districts and state governments in the position of having to provide the needed funding or risk being punished under the mandates of this law.

NCLB was a promise to all our children, a promise to provide them with the tools and skills they need to succeed in school and enter the 21st century workforce or pursue a post-secondary



education. The failure to properly invest in NCLB is hurting our teachers, school officials and, most importantly, our children. That is why Representative Schwartz supports a budget that will balance the federal government's checkbook within seven years, while also meeting our full obligation to NCLB.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

When Congress passed the historic *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) in 1975, it committed to cover 40 percent of the cost of educating every student with a disability. Despite this, President George W. Bush's 2007 budget did not meet this pledge. Instead, President Bush requested only 17 percent of the costs of educating every child with a special need. This will amount to a loss of \$198.3 million for special education students in Pennsylvania. From her seat on the House Budget Committee, Representative Schwartz opposed President Bush's budget and voted, instead, for a budget that would have put the nation on track to meet its commitment to special needs students.

## **VOUCHERS**

The Bush Administration and some of members of Congress have proposed using taxpayer dollars to pay for a student's tuition at a private or religious school. Representative Schwartz believes these efforts are misguided and that tuition vouchers severely weaken the integrity of our public education system. Vouchers do not address the challenges facing our public schools – over-crowding, aging buildings and resources, and inadequate funding. They also divert important resources to schools that are not held accountable for how, who, and what they teach. Instead of advocating for vouchers, Representative Schwartz believes Congress should fulfill its funding obligations to NCLB.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Representative Schwartz knows that obtaining a college degree is not only a part of the American dream, but also critical for those who want to be successful in today's global economy. Over the course of a lifetime, a college graduate can expect to earn \$1 million more than an individual with only a high school diploma. Unfortunately, tuition costs throughout the country have been steadily increasing – making it difficult for many hard-working Americans to afford college.

For example, tuition at four-year public colleges has risen 40 percent since 2001. Yet the purchasing power of Pell grants, which are the foundation of the nation's efforts to expand access to college, has severely diminished over the last thirty years. Currently, they cover only 30 percent of college costs – down from 72 percent in 1976, and 42 percent at the start of the Bush Administration. The typical student borrower, which includes more than two-thirds of students, graduates from college with \$17,500 in debt. All of these factors prevent millions of qualified high schools graduates from attending college.

Representative Schwartz is working to make college more affordable. She opposed passage of the *2006 Budget Reconciliation Act*, which cut federal student aid programs by \$12 billion – the largest cut in history. She is a cosponsor of legislation, *Reverse the Republican Raid on Student Aid Act*, which would cut interest rates on student loans in half – from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent for student borrowers and from 8.5 percent to 4.25 percent for parent borrowers. If implemented, this legislation would save the average student borrower, who has \$17,500 in debt and 15 years to repay the loan, approximately \$5,600 over the life of the loan. Representative Schwartz is also an

advocate for increasing the maximum Pell grant, which under the Republican leadership has been stagnant for four straight years.

### **LIFELONG LEARNING**

Representative Schwartz understands that education does not end once a person obtains a diploma. The U.S. workforce must remain competitive through constant innovation and education. Therefore, it is critical that lifelong learning is encouraged and supported by both the government and employers. Representative Schwartz supports expansion of workforce development grants as well as training for those Americans who lost their employment due to globalization.